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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S NAME CHANGE CAMPAIGN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus their coverage February 13 on the DPP government's name change campaign and the 2008 presidential elections. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on page two that read "Bian Steps on the Red Line Again to Pave the Way Early for Elections." The paper also ran a news story on page four quoting former President Lee Teng-hui as saying in an interview with the Japan-based "Sankei Shimbun" that the DPP regime appears to be moribund.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, criticized the Blue camp for being the biggest hurdle to Taiwan's name-change campaign and normalization. The article also said Washington's expression of no support for the name change of Taiwan's state-run enterprises was a surprise to Taiwan and obviously a misunderstanding of the island's policy. A "China Times" news analysis, however, criticized President Chen Shui-bian for again stepping on the red line drawn by the United States and China in order to pave the way for the upcoming elections. An op-ed in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said the United States is waiting to see how the Blue camp will react to the DPP's name change campaign. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" also lashed out at the DPP's move and said "Taiwan thus is more divided and isolated, not better identified." End summary.

A) "Pro-Unification Force Is Really the Biggest Hurdle to Name Change [Campaign] and Normalization of Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 550,000] editorialized (2/13):

"... It is the same with every society; old forces will usually lash back during the process of eliminating old things. Taiwan's move to rectify its name and write a new constitution is thus a long road, and it is expected that the road is rough and bumpy and full of obstacles. But still, it was a surprise to see the United States say it 'does not support' the name changes of Taiwan's state-run enterprises. The U.S. attitude was obviously the result of its misunderstanding of Taiwan's name-change policy. But with adequate communication to clarify [with Washington] that the name-change move does not violate President Chen Shui-bian's Four Noes pledge, the misunderstanding will be easily resolved, and the United States will change to support Taiwan's relevant policies. As a result, there is no need to worry about Washington's current attitude; instead, it is the opposition force in Taiwan that is the biggest hurdle to the name-change campaign and all other policies that may finally lead to [Taiwan's] normalization, and that is something [we] should never easily overlook. ...

"In the wake of 2000, even though the pan-Blue camp's direction of leaning toward China but keeping its distance from the United States

has gradually taken shape, it continues to place hope in the United States. For one thing, U.S. support is of extreme importance to Taiwan if the latter wants to have a place and survive in the free world. But any reform initiated by Taiwan, should it involve Taiwan-U.S.-China relations, has always triggered doubts from the United States. In addition, when President A-Bian first assumed office, he unwisely made the Four Noes pledge to the United States. This pledge has become an 'incantation crown' that restricts Taiwan from moving forward and renewing itself [This refers to the crown on the head of Monkey King Sun Wukong in "Journey to the West" that would tighten painfully whenever the monk Xuan Zang chanted a particular incantation]. All the more, the pan-Blue camp has taken advantage of the pledge and quoted the U.S. opposition whenever it suits it to suppress the assertion of Taiwan-centered consciousness.

Washington's opposition to the name-change campaign this time was obviously a misunderstanding. But the pan-Blue camp acted as if it had acquired a rare treasure it could use as much as it pleased; [its action] has all the more exposed its hollowness and its shutting off of itself from Taiwan. ..."

B) "Bian Steps on the Red Line Again to Pave the Way Early for the Elections"

Journalist Lin Shu-ling noted in a news analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (2/13):

"... Over the past year, Bian has experienced the cold bench that the United States put him on - Washington once penalized him by disallowing him to set foot in the continental United States. But in a turnaround, he was granted to transit the two big cities in the West Coast - San Francisco and Los Angeles - in January of this year during his trip to Nicaragua. "Let's rush in first [and think later]!" has become Chen Shui-bian's behavior pattern in handling the interaction between Taiwan and the United States. Basically, the Bian administration believes that, even though Washington has to restrain Taiwan so as to be able to show Beijing, it does not want

to see China expand excessively and thus threaten U.S. hegemony in the world. As a result, [Chen knows that] Washington will not easily give up on Taiwan.

"The fearless Bian administration has stronger determination and firmness to push for the name-change campaign compared to his move to 'cease the functions of the National Unification Council (NUC).' When playing the card of 'ceasing the functions of the NUC' in February 2006, the Bian administration even sought to package its move: to calm the United States, he repeatedly emphasized that 'ceasing the functions' was not equal to 'abolishing.' But this time, Bian announced publicly that 'name change is just a small step to build Taiwan proactively into a normal and complete country,' and that 'Taiwan is our nation.' Bian even announced publicly that there will be a next step, a move of strong provocative significance to the United States and Beijing.

"In particular, when the U.S. State Department has just stated publicly that it does not support the name change of Taiwan's state-run enterprises, Chen not only did not care about it but also geared up to move forward full speed ahead. Bian's action fully demonstrated that he has started campaigning for the Green camp's victory in the legislative elections and the 2008 presidential elections. In an attempt to influence the voters, Chen tried to heat up tensions by challenging the United States and China. ..."

C) "Green Camp Strives for 'Name Change;' United States Waits to See Blue Camp's Action"

Edward Chen, Professor of Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (2/13):

"... Prior to the Legislative Yuan elections in 2004, the DPP government chanted its attempt to 'change the names' of [Taiwan's] government-run businesses and its agencies overseas. But the then-Cabinet headed by Yu Shyi-kun held its tongue after the U.S. State Department said it does not support the move, and the 'name-change' campaign died away quietly. This time, the DPP obviously demonstrated a tougher position, but the question is: What is the United States waiting for? This writer believes that

Washington is waiting for action of the Blue camp in Taiwan and a request from Beijing. ... It is more appropriate to say that Washington is readily awaiting the Blue camp's action in the Legislative Yuan to 'counterstrike' the 'name-change' campaign than it is to say that Washington's reaction this time seemed less strong than last time. ..."

D) "Name Changes to Backfire"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] (2/13):

"... The draft of the new constitution is yet to be unveiled and the name-changing task is limited to only a few state-owned enterprises. Such moves don't elevate Taiwan's status but serve Beijing's goal of downgrading the island. ... Despite their rhetoric otherwise, the Chen-DPP leadership has long been engaged in the game of 'breaking twigs without touching the trunk' for the obvious purpose of misleading independence supporters at home and avoiding offending Taiwan's mentor and protector the U.S. So it abolished the 1991 National Unification Council and its guidelines last spring, dropped the name of the late President Chiang Kai-shek from Taiwan's main international airport last September and last week replaced 'China' with 'Taiwan' from the names of three state enterprises in an assertion of local identity despite criticism from the United States. None helps to reduce Taiwan's Chinese-ness. ...

Most people now realize that Taiwan independence is a losing cause. When threatened with definite retaliation from the mainland, the cause loses its appeal. Endless political upheavals, economic stagnation and social division haunt the people. Taiwan-based foreign business groups, such as the American Chamber of Commerce and the European Chamber of Commerce, have gone out of their way to oppose it. Relations with the mainland are getting worse. Taiwan becomes a flashpoint and a troublemaker in the eyes of the world. War is a constant worry for all. The name-changing game also has caused increasing mistrust of vital allies: the U.S., Japan and Singapore. Taiwan thus is more divided and isolated, not better identified."

YOUNG